

diptyk

6 Special Projects showcase the fair's commitment to opening up conversation around contemporary African art to include multiple diasporic perspectives from the so-called "periphery".

As 1-54 returns to London to celebrate its sixth consecutive year at Somerset House, this year's fair features more than 130 artists from 21 countries representing Africa and the diaspora presented by 43 exhibitors. Notable returning galleries include Galerie Cécile Fakhoury (Abidjan and Dakar), MAGNIN-A (Paris), Vigo Gallery (London) and the Gallery of African Art (GAFRA, London). According to C. Bendu Cooper, director of the Gallery of African Art (GAFRA, London), they are exhibiting at 1-54 London for a third year specifically because "it presents a great opportunity for artists and galleries to get exposure to a wider international market." This global focus is evident in the fair's growth. Since inception of the London edition in 2013, 1-54 has added editions in New York and Marrakech to its roster. There are 12 exhibitors showing at the London fair for the first time, including galleries such as Yossi Milo Gallery (New York), MOVART (Luanda), Loft Art Gallery (Casablanca), James Cohan (New York) and Retro Africa (Abuja). "It's important to bring together the voices of African artists who have more international careers with those who are under-represented in the United States," notes Jane Cohan, whose first 1-54 London booth includes works by Elias Sime and Yinka Shonibare MBE. The presence of art world heavyweights like Shonibare at 1-54 helps to contextualize emerging artists within the field and the market. Highlights include Angolan photographer Keyenya who unveils her latest work *Floating nightmares*, American multi-disciplinary artist Derrick Adams and Mozambican painter Nelly Guambe.

RE-PRESENTING CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ART

The extended Special Projects program reveals an optimistic retelling of contemporary African art. Perhaps the most anticipated project of 1-54 is the Courtyard Commission. For this year, 88-year-old Sudanese painter Ibrahim El-Salahi discloses his first-ever sculpture project. The artist has created a forest of sculptural trees inspired by the Haraz acacia tree, greeting visitors with themes of growth and individuality. Although El-Salahi typically works in 2D, his reputation as one of the most important pioneering African and Arab Modernists makes for a compelling prospect. Mauritanian artist Shiraz Bayjoo's design for the 1-54 Lounge brings together archive-based works in glass display cases to

explore indigenous histories and European colonialism in the Mascarene Islands and Madagascar. It should be noted that Mauritius, Bayjoo's home country, was once colonized by the British and that 1-54 places this project in the heart of the British capital. Bayjoo sees the project as "a space to contemplate the enormity of these stories, to step in and explore the countless possible retellings."

The South African artist Athi-Patra Ruga will be showing in Somerset House's Terrace Rooms from October 2018 up until January 2019, as part of 1-54 and the Charles Russell Speechlys exhibition series. He will display three celebrated bodies of work, that explore identity in relation to South Africa's colonial past and to his position as a queer Xhosa man. Ruga is in good company: solo exhibitions of photographers Hassan Hajjaj (see pages 24-29) and Malick Sidibé took place in the Terrace Rooms during past editions of the fair.

Other Special Projects showcase the fair's commitment to opening up conversation about contemporary African art to include multiple diasporic perspectives from the so-called "periphery". A mixed-media installation by rising star Larry Achiampong explores communities of the diaspora living in the West and their relationship to religion and domesticity. A duo exhibition by emerging Jamaican artists Lesabo Johnson and Monique Gilpin focuses on Caribbean identity. It is curated by Suzie Wong Presents and 198 Contemporary Arts and Learning, a partnership that aims to "strengthen transatlantic relationships and increase Caribbean visibility." Finally, newly-discovered paintings by the Haitian artist Robert Saint-Brice (1893-1973) make their debut at the fair, displaying Saint-Brice's interpretations of his dreams and religious experiences as a voodoo priest.

Bringing together artists from the perceived "periphery" and showing their work in London tells another side of the story. It allows for a reframing of power relations that resonates throughout the fair, with artists such as Omar Victor Diop, who inserts himself in photographic self portraits that reimagine historical events, and Bodys Isek Kingelez whose dream-like miniature cityscape models quite literally present an alternate story of Kinshasa. Both artists are presenting with MAGNIN-A. These limitless retellings of history read like a declaration that contemporary African art is not a trend but a fixture in the global art market.

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largely anticipated this current trend, has seen an exponential growth of young dynamic art structures. Tiwani Contemporary, Jack Bell, and Tyburn are among the biggest players. Tyburn, established in 2015, today represents some of the most sought-after artists from the African continent, such as Joël Andriamarisoa or Mohau Modisakeng, who was a visiting artist at the South Africa pavilion at the Venice Biennale. In Paris, MAGNIN-A, Anne de Villepoix, and Eric Hussenot are making their mark and helping to bring the French capital up to speed. And some of the most powerful galleries are starting to take notice: Daniel Templon will exhibit works this season by his new protégé, the Senegalese painter Omar Ba.

AFRICA FOR AFRICANS

Not all the stars are aligned, however. The Achilles' heel of the African art market remains its weak connection to local communities, with too few collectors or galleries on the continent and little political support. "The potential is enormous, but artists need the support of the governments in their own countries, be it in terms of access to education, encouraging creativity or public financial support for art exhibits," says Sotheby's Charlotte Lidon. Because of this lack of state support, the international biennales in Dakar, Bamako or Marrakech, only seem to echo the scene's growing disconnect, not to say outright schizophrenia, despite their international appeal. And in spite of the success of the Dakar biennale, headed by Simon Njami, and its central role in the African market (300 art events programmed in a single city), it barely hides the continent's lack of financial and professional means, let alone the fragility of its own institutions. The 7th Marrakech Biennale, which was

set to open in February 2018, was cancelled. Why? Because of debts in excess of 3.5 million dirhams and lack of support from both public institutions and the private sector.

Disregarding naysayers on all sides, artists, curators and collectors have taken their own initiatives, and the lines are slowly moving. These include the Zinsou Foundation in Benin, Koyo Kouoh's RAW Material Company in Dakar, and the Centre for Contemporary Art started by Bisi Silva in Lagos, just to name a few. Certain internationally renowned artists are also reinvesting back into the cultural field. Ethiopian artist Aida Muluneh launched the Addis Foto Fest in 2010. Barthélémy Toguo and William Kentridge respectively, founded Bandjoun Station in Cameroon and the Centre for the Less Good Idea in South Africa. "There has been an important movement by artists, whether in terms of engagement or return" curator Marie-Anne Yemi tells us. There are even more encouraging indicators. Cécile Fakhoury opened a second gallery last May, not in Paris or London, but in Dakar. "There is a cultural vitality in Dakar which extends well beyond the Biennale," explains the Côte d'Ivoire-based gallery. In Uganda the Kampala Biennale, sponsored in part by Simon Njami, is attempting to create a new platform to make up for the lack of arts education on the continent. After an open call for applications, several young artists were selected to assist seven major artists (including Konaté, Tayou and Gondor) with their ongoing projects. More than just a show space, the Biennale hopes to play a vital role in the transmission of acquired skills and knowledge. We hope and expect that in this way, the continent's own dynamic and creative forces will be able to stimulate a local market which has yet to reach its full potential.



SOLD
248,512 €

Yinka Shonibare, *Crash Welly*, 2009, Mannequin, Dutch wax printed cotton textile, leather, fiberglass and metal, 132 x 198 x 260 cm
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* DIMITRI FAGBOHOUN Borderless art

Born the son of a Beninese father and a Ukrainian mother, Dimitri Fagbohoun now lives between Paris, Brussels and Cotonou. His work explores non-linear visions, delving into ideas, identities, histories and boundaries, may they be geographical or artistic. His series *Recollection* reflects the influence of African artworks we admire in museums all around the world while raising important questions on the processes of cultural and artistic appropriation surrounding them. He has shown internationally (Bamako Encounters, Museum für moderne Kunst in Frankfurt) and has received a scholarship from the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art in Washington, DC.

£1,602 - £5,339

Dimitri Fagbohoun, *Microcosmos, Suite, Recollections Series*, 2017-2018.
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(Galerie Cécile Fakhoury)

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